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THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

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A Shorter Shakespeare

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

ARRANGED BY
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INTRODUCTION

EVEN if Shakespeare had wished to make England the scene of his play about the cruel money-lender, he could not have done so, because for 300 years the Jews had been banished from this country. Although there were several ballads and folk tales which gave the most extravagant and ridiculous accounts of Hebrew customs, few among Shakespeare's audiences in the Globe Theatre would ever have seen a Jew until Shylock appeared on the stage.

We know, however, that there were exceptions to the general decree of banishment. One of these was a certain Doctor Roderigo Lopez, physician to Queen Elizabeth, who was accused by his enemies of being involved in a plot against her majesty. Public hatred was easily inflamed against the unfortunate man and, after a mockery of a trial, he was condemned to the usual traitor's penalty in 1594. It is quite possible that this incident may have given Shakespeare the idea of writing a play with a Jew as the central character, for 'The Merchant of Venice' was given its first performance only a year or so later.

In choosing Venice as his setting, Shakespeare was paying compliment to what was, in his day, one of the richest cities in the world. Venice was of enormous importance as a centre of distribution for the luxury trade from the East, and each year handled a prodigious wealth of gold, ivory, silks and spices. Elizabethan noblemen and soldier-adventurers would return from Venice with stories of her fine buildings, stately ca als and gondolas, princely merchants who built their own palaces, and the all-powerful Doge (or Duke), supported

by his council of Magnificos chosen from the most wealthy and influential families. The city was a byword for luxury and magnificence. If we wanted to find a similar example today we should have to look westwards, to New York, and we may not be far out if we think of Antonio as the sixteenth-century equivalent of a Wall Street millionaire.

PERSONS IN THE PLAY

THE DUKE OF VENICE

THE PRINCE OF MOROCCO, THE PRINCE OF ARRAGON, suitors to Portia

ANTONIO, a wealthy merchant

BASSANIO, his friend

GRATIANO, friend to Bassanio

LORENZO, a young Venetian, in love with Jessica

SALARINO, SOLANIO, citizens of Venice

SHYLOCK, a Jewish money-lender

TUBAL, another Jew, friend to Shylock

LAUNCELOT GOBBO, servant to Shylock, later to Bassanio

BALTHAZAR, STEPHANO, servants to Portia

SERVANT, to Antonio

PORTIA, a rich heiress of Belmont

NERISSA, her companion and maid

JESSICA, daughter to Shylock

Non-speaking parts include the Magnificos of Venice, a gaoler, various servants and attendants.

NOTES ON THE READING OF CERTAIN CHARACTERS

DUKE OF VENICE: powerful and dignified, accustomed to command.

PRINCE OF ARRAGON: rather fond of the sound of his own voice, and something of a snob.

ANTONIO: a serious, reflective man, in early middle-age, loyal and generous by nature. Very fond of Bassanio.

BASSANIO: younger than his friend, and of a gayer disposition.

GRATIANO: a bluff, outspoken man, aged probably between Antonio and Bassanio.

SHYLOCK: it would be ridiculous to suggest that this remarkable character could be dealt with in a few lines: you must ask your teacher for guidance. Crafty, subtle and cruel, he should speak with a pronounced Hebrew accent, behaving sometimes with tremendous dignity and sometimes (unconsciously) quite the reverse.

TUBAL: again, Hebrew accent. A faintly comical character.

LAUNCELOT GOBBO: a clown. This is a large and demanding part in the original play, here reduced to very minor proportions. If he can be played with a 'smart' cockney accent, so much the better.

PORTIA: the heroine, attractive, intelligent and ready-witted, having all the gifts of wealth and nature, but not in the least spoilt by them.

NERISSA: a young lady with a fairly quick tongue.

NOTES

The chief aim of this series is to encourage *uninterrupted* reading of the plays. The notes which follow are merely reminders for the teacher of points he may care to clarify in some detail before the scene is read. It should then be possible to read the complete scene without interruption, followed by a short pause for comment, if desired. The notes may also be of some help to the general reader, perhaps re-approaching Shakespeare after a prolonged estrangement! To supplement the sketchy details provided, the general reader should refer to annotated copies of the complete text, to be found in all public libraries.

The following terms relating to money-lending and the law should be explained before starting to read the play: security, interest, principal, forfeiture, usury, precedent, alien, deed of gift.

I have also tried to anticipate a few difficulties in vocabulary by giving the words in italics in the notes, without comment.

Asterisks thus * * * in the text at the beginning of a scene suggest reference to notes *before* the scene is read.

A list of *speaking* characters prefaces each scene.

ACT I

Scene 1 line 8 Argosies: Antonio's well-laden merchant ships

Scene 3 line 29 Habitation . . . your prophet the Nazarite . . . : the prophet is Christ, and the 'habitation' refers to the Gadarene swine. Shylock is sneering at the Christian habit of eating pork, which to the Jew is unclean line 37 Publican: the despised tax-gatherer of the New Testament line 75 *Gaberdine*

ACT II

Scene 1 line 2 *Livery*

Scene 5 line 1 *Penthouse*

Scene 6 line 20 *Dross*

ACT III

Scene 2 line 27 Hard food for Midas: the legendary king who had the inconvenient gift of turning into gold everything that he touched

ACT IV

Scene 1 line 22 *exact'st* line 40 *baned* line 137 i.e. "Mercy is a quality that cannot be forced. . . . ." The editor dared not meddle with what is at once the best known and least understood line in Shakespeare. line 156 *mitigate*

ACT V

Scene 1 lines 4-7 Troilus and Cressida: Pyramus and Thisbe. These two pairs of legendary lovers will require elucidation to most young readers line 45 Muddy vesture of decay: mortal flesh. This well-known passage, difficult for children, but retained for its splendid sound and imagery, refers to the "music of the spheres", supposedly only audible to the soul when liberated from the body after death line 47 Diana: Lorenzo is referring to the moon line 85 A paltry ring, etc.: Gratiano is misguidedly trying to excuse his breach of trust by sneering at the ring Nerissa gave him. Today he would say, "A cheap thing—with the sort of poetry on it that you might find in a Christmas cracker!" We still find doggerel rhymes of endearment—"mottoes"—in crackers; it was evidently the custom for similar sentiments to be engraved on knife-blades for Elizabethan dealers in the souvenir trade

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

ACT I

SCENE 1 * * *

(*ANTONIO, SALARINO, SOLANIO, LORENZO, GRATIANO*)(Bassanio.)

A street in Venice, not far from the Grand Canal. Antonio is talking to Salarino and Solanio.

ANTONIO (*out of sorts*)
In sooth, I know not why I am so sad.
It wearies me—you say it wearies you—
But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,
I am to learn. . . .
And such a want-wit sadness makes of me,
That I have much ado to know myself.

SALARINO
Your mind is tossing on the ocean,
There where your argosies with portly sail
Do overpeer the petty traffickers.

SOLANIO (*agreeing*)
Believe me, sir, had *I* such ventures forth, 10
The better part of my affections would
Be with my hopes abroad. I should be still
Plucking the grass, to know where siits the wind,
Peering in maps for ports, and piers, and roads;
And every object that might make me fear
Misfortune to my ventures, out of doubt,
Would make me sad. . . .

SALARINO (*nodding wisely*)
I know Antonio
Is sad to think upon his merchandise.

ANTONIO
Believe me, no: I thank my fortune for it,
My ventures are not in one vessel trusted, 20
Nor to one place; nor is my whole estate
Upon the fortune of this present year.
Therefore, my merchandise makes me not sad.

SALARINO (*skittishly*)
Why then, you are in love!
(*Antonio shakes his head in a firm denial.*)
Not in love neither? Then let's say you are sad
Because you are not merry—and 'twere as easy
For you to laugh and leap, and say you are merry
Because you are not sad!
(*Enter Bassanio, Lorenzo and Gratiano.*)

SOLANIO
Here comes Bassanio, your most noble kinsman,
Gratiano and Lorenzo. Fare ye well: 30
We leave you now with better company.
(*Exeunt Salarino and Solanio.*)

LORENZO
My Lord Bassanio, since you have found Antonio,
We too will leave you; but, at dinner-time,
I pray you, have in mind where we must meet.

BASSANIO
I will not fail you.

GRATIANO (*with a critical glance at Antonio*)
You look not well, Signior Antonio;
You have too much respect upon the world.
They lose it that do buy it with much care:
Believe me, you are marvellously changed.

ANTONIO (*shrugging*)
I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano: 40
A stage where every man must play a part,
And mine a sad one.

LORENZO (*to Bassanio and Antonio*)
Well, we will leave you then, till dinner-time.

ANTONIO
Farewell.

(*Exeunt Gratiano and Lorenzo. There is a short pause while Antonio looks at Bassanio searchingly before broaching his question.*)

Well, tell me now, what lady is the same
To whom you swore a secret pilgrimage,
That you today promised to tell me of?

BASSANIO (*with youthful enthusiasm*)
In Belmont is a lady richly left,
And she is fair, and, fairer than that word,
Of wondrous virtues: sometimes from her eyes 50
I did receive fair speechless messages.
Her name is —— Portia. . . .
Nor is the wide world ignorant of her worth,
For the four winds blow in from every coast
Renownèd suitors; and her sunny locks
Hang on her temples like a golden fleece,
And many Jasons come in quest of her.
O, my Antonio! Had I but the means
To hold a rival place with one of them!

ANTONIO (*his smile tinged with sadness*)
Thou knowest that all my fortunes are at sea; 60
Neither have I money, nor sufficient stock
To raise a present sum. Therefore, go forth,
Try what my credit can in Venice do
To furnish thee to Belmont, to fair Portia.
Go, presently inquire, and so will I,
Where money is, and I no question make
To have it of my trust, or for my sake.

SCENE 2

(*PORTIA, NERISSA, STEPHANO*)

A room in Portia's magnificent country villa at Belmont. Nerissa is gossiping with her mistress over their needlework. Portia's replies should all be very light-hearted: it is clear that none of her suitors so far has been anything more than a joke to her.

PORTIA (*cheerfully*)
By my troth, Nerissa, my little body is a-weary of this great world. I may neither choose whom I would, nor refuse whom I dislike! Is it not hard, Nerissa, that I cannot choose one, nor refuse none?

NERISSA
Your father was ever virtuous, therefore the lottery that he hath devised in these three chests of gold, silver, and lead will no doubt never be chosen by any but one who shall rightly love.
(*pausing in her needlework to look directly at Portia*)
But what warmth is there in your affection towards any of these princely suitors that are already come?

PORTIA (*with a merry laugh*)
I pray thee, over-name them, and, as thou namest them, I will describe them; and, according to my description, guess at my affection!

NERISSA
First, there is the Neapolitan prince.

PORTIA
Ay, he's a colt indeed, for he doth nothing but talk of his horse!

NERISSA
Then there is the County Palatine.

PORTIA
He doth nothing but frown. . . . I had rather be married to a skull with a bone in his mouth than to either of these! 20

NERISSA
What say you to the French lord, Monsieur Le Bon?

PORTIA (*shrugging*)
God made him, and therefore let him pass for a man!

NERISSA
What say you then to Falconbridge, the young baron of England?

PORTIA (*laughing*)
You know I say nothing to him, for he understands not me, nor I him. He hath neither Latin, French, nor Italian, and you know I have a poor pennyworth in the English! He is a proper man's picture—but alas, who can converse with a dumb-show? 30

NERISSA
How like you the young German, the Duke of Saxony's nephew?

PORTIA
Very vilely in the morning, when he is sober, and *most* vilely in the afternoon, when he is drunk! I hope I shall make shift to go without *him*: I will do anything, Nerissa, ere I will be married to a sponge! 40

NERISSA (*more seriously*)
Do you not remember, lady, in your father's time, a Venetian, a scholar and a soldier, that came hither in company of the Marquess of Montferrat?

PORTIA
Yes, yes, it was Bassanio: as I think, so was he called.

NERISSA
True, madam: he, of all the men that ever my foolish eyes looked upon, was the best deserving a fair lady.

(*Enter Stephano.*)

PORTIA
I remember him well, and I remember him worthy 50
of thy praise. . . . How now! What news?

STEPHANO
The four strangers seek for you, madam, to take their leave, and there is a forerunner come from a fifth, the Prince of Morocco, who brings word, the Prince his master will be here tonight.

PORTIA
If I could bid the fifth welcome with so good heart as I can bid the other four farewell, I should be glad of his approach. . .
Come, Nerissa. Sirrah, go before:
While we shut the gate upon one wooer, another 60
knocks at the door!

SCENE 3 * * *

(*SHYLOCK, BASSANIO, ANTONIO*)

A public place near the Rialto, or Exchange, in Venice. Bassanio has met Shylock, and is sounding him about the loan of 3,000 *ducats. It is not easy to compare the value of money in Shakespeare's time with what it might buy today, but a ducat was a gold coin, and we should probably not be far out in saying that, today, Bassanio's loan would be in the region of* £10,000.

Shylock, like a true money-lender, wants to know all the facts before giving an answer!

SHYLOCK (*cautiously*)
Three thousand ducats: well?

BASSANIO
Ay, sir, for three months.

SHYLOCK
For three months: well?

BASSANIO
For the which, as I told you, Antonio shall be bound.

SHYLOCK
Antonio shall become bound: well?

BASSANIO (*impatiently*)
Can you serve me? Will you pleasure me? Shall I know your answer?

SHYLOCK (*turning it over slowly in his mind, half-aloud*)
Three thousand ducats . . . for three months . . . and Antonio bound . . . 10

BASSANIO (*still impatient*)
Your answer to that!

SHYLOCK (*slowly*)
Antonio is a good man . . .

BASSANIO (*brusquely*)
Have you heard any imputation to the contrary?

SHYLOCK
Ho! No, no, no, no: my meaning in saying he is a good man is to have you understand me that he is sufficient. Yet—his means are not altogether sure: he hath an argosy bound to Tripolis, another

to the Indies; I understand, moreover, upon the Rialto, he hath a third at Mexico, a fourth for England, and other ventures he hath, spread out 20 abroad. There is the peril of waters, winds and rocks. . . . The man is, notwithstanding, sufficient. Three thousand ducats. . . . I think I may take his bond.

BASSANIO (*roughly*)
Be assured you may.

SHYLOCK (*calmly*)
I will be assured I may: may I speak with Antonio?

BASSANIO
If it please you to dine with us.

SHYLOCK (*bitterly*)
Yes, to smell pork: to eat of the habitation which your prophet the Nazarite conjured the devil into! 30 I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so forth, but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you. What news on the Rialto? Who is he comes here?

(*Enter Antonio.*)

BASSANIO
This is Signior Antonio.

SHYLOCK (*aside*)
How like a fawning publican he looks!
I hate him for he is a Christian,
But more because in low simplicity
He lends out money gratis, and brings down 40
The rate of interest here with us in Venice.
If I can catch him once upon the hip,
I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.
He hates our sacred nation, and he rails

On me, my bargains, and my well-won thrift—
Which he calls interest. Cursed be my tribe,
If I forgive him. . . .

BASSANIO
Shylock, do you hear?

SHYLOCK (*coming back to earth suddenly*)
I am considering of my present wealth,
And, by the near guess of my memory, 50
I cannot instantly raise up the sum
Of full three thousand ducats. What of that?
Tubal, a wealthy Hebrew of my tribe,
Will furnish me. But wait! How many months
Do you desire?
(*now pretending to notice Antonio for the first time*)
Rest you fair, good signior;
Your worship was the last man in our mouths!

ANTONIO
Shylock, albeit I neither lend nor borrow
By taking nor by giving of interest,
Yet, to supply the ripe wants of my friend,
I'll break a custom. 60
(*to Bassanio*)
Is he yet informed
How much we want?

SHYLOCK
Ay, ay, three thousand ducats.

ANTONIO
And for three months.

SHYLOCK
I had forgot, three months: you told me so.
Now let me see. . . .
Three thousand ducats: 'tis a good round sum.
Three months from twelve . . . then, let me see,
the rate—

ANTONIO (*impatiently*)
Well, Shylock, shall we be beholding to you?

SHYLOCK
Signior Antonio, many a time and oft
In the Rialto you have rated me 70
About my moneys and my interests.
Still I have borne it with a patient shrug,
For sufferance is the badge of all our tribe.
You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog,
And spit upon my Jewish gaberdine.
Well then, it now appears you need my help!
Go to, then: you come to me, and you say,
'*Shylock, we would have moneys!*' You say so:
You that did void your rheum upon my beard,
And foot me as you spurn a stranger cur 80
Over your threshold: moneys is your suit.
What should I say to you? Should I not say,
Hath a dog money? Is it possible
A cur can lend three thousand ducats?

ANTONIO (*with disdain*)
I am as like to call thee so again,
To spit on thee again, to spurn thee, too.
If thou wilt lend this money, lend it not
As to thy friends,
But lend it rather to thine enemy,
Who, if he break, thou mayst with better face 90
Exact the penalty!

SHYLOCK (*feigning to be hurt*)
Why, look you, how you storm!
I would be friends with you, and have your love,
Forget the shames that you have stained me with,
Supply your present wants, and take no dram
Of interest for my moneys—and you'll not hear
me—
This is kind I offer!

ANTONIO (*suspiciously*)
This were kindness!

SHYLOCK (*eagerly, and pretending to treat the whole business as a joke*)

This kindness will I show!
Go with me to a notary, seal me there
Your single bond; and, in a merry sport, 100
If you repay me not on such a day,
In such a place, such sum or sums as are
Expressed in the condition, let the forfeit
Be nominated for—

(*Here Shylock hesitates and looks at Antonio, as if searching in his mind for some ridiculous object as a security, then, with a laugh*)

—an equal pound
Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken
In what part of your body pleaseth me!

ANTONIO (*enthusiastic, because he considers this a most sporting gesture*)
Content, i' faith: I'll seal to such a bond,
And say there is much kindness in the Jew!

BASSANIO (*anxiously*)
You shall not seal to such a bond for me:
I'd rather dwell in my necessity. 110

ANTONIO (*confidently*)
Why, fear not, man! I will not forfeit it:
Within these two months, that's a month before
This bond expires, I do expect return
Of thrice three times the value of this bond.

SHYLOCK (*aside, at first*)
O, Father Abraham! What these Christians are,
Whose own hard dealing teaches them suspect
The thoughts of others. . . . Pray you, tell me this:
If he should break his day, what should I gain

By the exacting of the forfeiture?
A pound of man's flesh, taken from a man, 120
Is not so estimable, profitable neither,
As flesh of muttons, beefs, or goats. I say,
To buy his favour, I extend this friendship.
If he will take it, so. If not, adieu,
And, for my love, I pray you wrong me not!

ANTONIO
Yes, Shylock, I will seal unto this bond.

SHYLOCK
Then meet me forthwith at the notary's;
Give him direction for this merry bond,
And I will go and purse the ducats straight,
And presently be with you. 130

ANTONIO (*as Shylock departs*)
Hie thee, gentle Jew.
This Hebrew will turn Christian: he grows kind.

BASSANIO
I like not fair terms and a villain's mind!

ANTONIO
Come on! In this there can be no dismay:
My ships come home a month before the day!

ACT II * * *

SCENE 1

(*PRINCE OF MOROCCO, PORTIA*)

Belmont: a room of state in Portia's villa.

The Prince of Morocco (a Moor, and therefore of near-black complexion) introduces himself to Portia, who explains to him the conditions of the casket lottery, in which her own hand in marriage is the prize.

On the stage, much of the charm of the casket scenes lies in the pageantry, an excuse for brilliant costumes and formal

groupings — something of the fun of a charade. We must try to imagine the characters in these scenes to be of stately bearing, beautifully dressed in the most costly robes, with rings, jewels and, where appropriate, splendid weapons.

When the curtain rises, Portia and a considerable number of her followers are grouped formally on the Right. A trumpeter enters Left, and blows a short fanfare, the signal for the entry of the Prince, followed by a large retinue of retainers, slaves and page-boys, all black and magnificently attired. After introductions have been effected in dumb-show, the Prince speaks:

MOROCCO (*majestically*)

Mislike me not for my complexion,
The shadowed livery of the burnished sun,
To whom I am a neighbour and near bred.
I tell thee, lady, this aspect of mine
Hath made to fear the valiant, and, I swear,
The best regarded maidens of our clime
Have loved it, too: I would not change this hue,
Except to steal *your* thoughts, my gentle queen. . . .

PORTIA

In terms of choice I am not solely led
By nice direction of a maiden's eyes; 10
Besides, the lottery of my destiny
Bars me the right of voluntary choosing.
But if my father had not ordered me
And hedged me by his will to yield myself
His wife who wins me by that means I told you,
Yourself, renowned prince, then stood as fair
As any comer I have looked on yet.

MOROCCO

Even for that I thank you;
Therefore, I pray you, lead me to the caskets
To try my fortune. 20

PORTIA

You must take your chance,

And either not attempt to choose at all,
Or swear before you choose, if you choose wrong,
Never to speak to lady afterward
In way of marriage: therefore be advised.

MOROCCO
Nor will not: come, bring me unto my chance.

PORTIA
First, forward to the temple: after dinner
Your hazard shall be made.

MOROCCO
Good fortune then,
To make me blest or cursed'st among men!
(*Trumpets, and exeunt in procession, right.*)

SCENE 2

(*JESSICA, LAUNCELOT*)

Venice. A room in Shylock's house. This short scene introduces a new side of the story. Jessica, Shylock's gay and attractive daughter, is in love with Lorenzo, Bassanio's friend, and plans to elope with him that very night, while her father is dining with Bassanio. It happens that Launcelot, Shylock's obstreperous servant, has just given notice in order to take the more highly paid position which Bassanio has offered him: thus he is able to act as a note carrier between Jessica and Lorenzo.

At the beginning of the scene, Jessica is seated at a table sealing a letter and talking to Launcelot at the same time.

JESSICA
I am sorry thou wilt leave my father so.
Our house is hell, and thou, a merry devil,
Didst rob it of some taste of tediousness.
But fare thee well; there is a ducat for thee:
And, Launcelot, soon at supper shalt thou see
Lorenzo, who is thy new master's guest.

Give him this letter; do it secretly;
And so, farewell—I would not have my father
See me in talk with thee.

LAUNCELOT
Adieu, most beautiful pagan, most sweet jew, 10
adieu!

JESSICA (*as Launcelot goes out*)
Farewell, good Launcelot.
Alack, what heinous sin is it in me
To be ashamed to be my father's child!
But though I am a daughter to his blood,
I am not to his manners. O, Lorenzo,
If thou keep promise, I shall end this strife,
Become a Christian, and thy loving wife. . . .

SCENE 3

(*LORENZO, LAUNCELOT, SALARINO, SOLANIO, GRATIANO*)

Venice. A street.

Gratiano, Lorenzo, Salarino and Solanio are discussing their plans for the elopement, which is to take place under the guise of a kind of carnival procession, known as a masque.

LORENZO
Nay, we will slink away in supper-time,
Disguise us at my lodging, and return
All in an hour.
(*Enter Launcelot, jauntily, with the letter.*)
Friend Launcelot, what's the news?

LAUNCELOT (*winking*)
If it shall please you to unseal this, you shall know.
(*Hands over the letter.*)

LORENZO
Whither goest thou?

LAUNCELOT (*waggishly*)
Marry, sir, to bid my old master, the Jew, to sup tonight with my new master, the Christian.

LORENZO (*giving money*)
Hold here, take this. Tell gentle Jessica I will not fail her. Speak it privately.

(*Exit Launcelot.*)

Go, gentlemen, 10
Will you prepare you for this masque tonight?

SALARINO
Ay, marry, I'll be gone about it straight.

SOLANIO
And so will I.

(*Exeunt Salarino and Solanio.*)

GRATIANO
Was not that letter from fair Jessica?

LORENZO (*whispers*)
I must needs tell thee all. She hath directed
How I shall take her from her father's house;
What gold and jewels she is furnished with;
What page's suit she hath in readiness.
Come, go with me: peruse this as thou goest.

SCENE 4

(*JESSICA, SHYLOCK, LAUNCELOT*)

Venice. A room in Shylock's house.

Launcelot has just delivered Bassanio's invitation, and Shylock, counting over a large bunch of keys, shouts for Jessica, who comes in.

JESSICA
Call you? What is your will?

SHYLOCK
I am bid forth to supper, Jessica:
There are my keys.
(*gives to her, then, thinking aloud*)
But wherefore should I go?
I am not bid for love; they flatter me.
But yet I'll go in hate, to feed upon
The prodigal Christian! Jessica, my girl,
Look to my house. I am right loath to go:
There is some ill a-brewing towards my rest,
For I did dream of money-bags tonight. . . .

LAUNCELOT
I beseech you, sir, go: my young master doth 10
expect you. I will not say you shall see a masque,
but if you do, then it was not for nothing that my
nose fell a-bleeding on Black-Monday last, at six
o'clock in the morning. . . .

SHYLOCK (*shocked*)
What! Are there masques? Hear you me, Jessica:
Lock up my doors; and when you hear the drum,
And the vile squealing of the wry-necked fife,
Clamber not you up to the casements then,
Nor thrust your head into the public street
To gaze on Christian fools with painted faces! 20
(*distractedly*)
By Jacob's staff I swear
I have no mind of feasting forth tonight . . .
But I will go. Go you before me, sirrah:
Say I will come.

LAUNCELOT
I will go before, sir.
(*whispering softly as he goes out past Jessica*)
Mistress, look out at window for all this:

There will come a Christian by,
Will be worth a Jewess' eye.

SHYLOCK (*sharply*)
What says that fool of Hagar's offspring, ha?

JESSICA (*smoothly*)
His words were, "*Farewell, mistress,*" nothing else. 30

SHYLOCK
Well, Jessica, go in.
(*He hesitates*)
Perhaps I will return immediately.
Do as I bid you: shut doors after you.
(*Exit Shylock.*)

JESSICA
Farewell—and if my fortune be not crossed,
I have a father, you a daughter, lost. . . .

SCENE 5 * * *

(*GRATIANO, SALARINO, LORENZO, JESSICA, ANTONIO*)

In front of Shylock's house. Night.
Bassanio and Gratiano, masked for the carnival, are waiting for Lorenzo.

GRATIANO
This is the penthouse under which Lorenzo
Desired us to make stand.

SALARINO
His hour is almost past.

GRATIANO
And it is marvel he out-dwells his hour,
For lovers ever run before the clock.

(*Enter Lorenzo.*)

LORENZO
Sweet friends, your patience for my long delay:
Not I, but my affairs have made you wait.
When you shall please to play the thief for wives
I'll watch as long for you then. Soft, approach:
Here dwells my father Jew.
(*calling to an upper window, softly*)
Ho! Who's within?
(*Jessica appears at the window, in a page's costume.*)

JESSICA (*calling down softly*)
Who are you? Tell me, for more certainty, 10
Although I'll swear that I do know your tongue.

LORENZO
Lorenzo, and thy love.

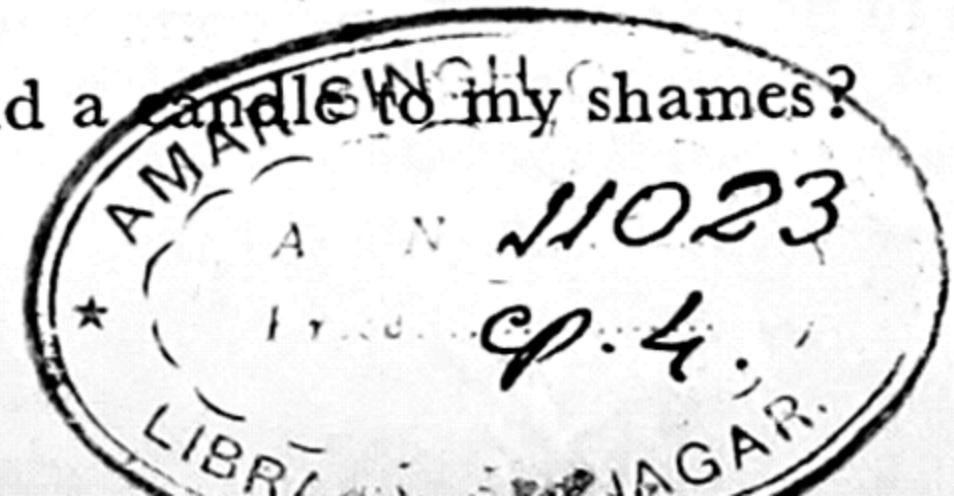
JESSICA
Lorenzo, certain, and my love indeed,
For who love I so much? And now who knows
But you, Lorenzo, whether I am yours?

LORENZO
Heaven and thy thoughts are witness that thou art!

JESSICA (*dropping a jewel-case from the window*)
Here, catch this casket: it is worth the pains!
I am glad 'tis night, you do not look on me,
For I am much ashamed of my exchange;
But love is blind, and lovers cannot see 20
The pretty follies that themselves commit,
For if they could, Cupid himself would blush
To see me thus transformed to a boy.

LORENZO
Descend, for you must be my torch-bearer.

JESSICA
What! Must I hold a candle to my shames?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LIBRARY PRAYAGAR

Why, 'tis an office of discovery, love,
And I should be obscured.

LORENZO

So are you, sweet,
Even in the lovely garnish of a boy.
But come at once,
For the close night doth play the runaway, 30
And we are stayed for at Bassanio's feast.

JESSICA

I will make fast the doors, and gild myself
With some more ducats, and be with you straight.
(*Disappears from the window.*)

GRATIANO

Now, by my hood, a Gentile, and no Jew!

LORENZO

Beshrew me, but I love her heartily,
For she is wise, if I can judge of her,
And fair she is, if that mine eyes be true.
(*The door opens quietly and Jessica appears, with bag and bundle.*)
What, art thou come? On, gentlemen, away!
Our masquing mates by this time for us stay.
(*Exeunt Lorenzo, Jessica, Salarino. As they disappear, Antonio enters, in haste, from the other side.*)

ANTONIO

Fie, fie, Gratiano! Where are all the rest? 40
'Tis nine o'clock: our friends all stay for you.
No masque tonight: the wind is come about.
Bassanio presently will go aboard:
I have sent twenty out to seek for you!

GRATIANO

I am glad on't. I desire no more delight
Than to be under sail and gone tonight.
(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE 6 * * *

(*PORTIA, MOROCCO*)

Belmont.

We are back in Portia's house, this time in a smaller room, at the far end of which is a rich tapestry curtain. As before, all the entries, and, indeed, the whole action of the scene, are formal and ceremonial.

When the curtain rises, trumpeters appear at Left and Right: a short fanfare introduces the Prince of Morocco and Portia, with their retinues, from Left and Right respectively.

PORTIA (*to a page*)

Go, draw aside the curtains, and uncover
The different caskets to this noble prince.

(*The page does so, revealing, on a table behind in an alcove, three caskets, of lead, silver and gold.*)

Now make your choice.

(*The Prince steps forward to the caskets, then hesitates. During his long speech, which is evidently in a musing manner, he quietly walks up and down in front of the caskets, sometimes pausing to pick one of them up and hold it out to the light.*)

MOROCCO

The first, of gold, which this inscription bears:
"*Who chooseth me shall gain what many men*
desire."
The second, silver, which this promise carries:
"*Who chooseth me shall get as much as he*
deserves."
This third, dull lead, with warning all as blunt:
"*Who chooseth me must give and hazard*
all he hath."
How shall I know if I do choose the right? 10

PORTIA

There's one of them contains my picture, Prince.
If you choose that, then I am yours withal.

MOROCCO

Some god direct my judgment! Let me see:
I will survey the inscriptions back again.
What says this leaden casket?
"*Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath.*"
Must give—for what? For lead? Hazard for lead?
This casket threatens. Men that hazard all
Do it in hope of fair advantages:
A golden mind stoops not to shows of dross: 20
I'll then nor give nor hazard aught for lead.
What says the silver with her virgin hue?
"*Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves.*"
As much as he deserves! Pause there, Morocco,
And weigh thy value with an even hand.
Let's see once more this saying graved in gold:
"*Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire.*"
Why, that's the lady: all the world desires her:
From the four corners of the earth they come
To kiss this shrine. Deliver me the key: 30
Here do I choose, and thrive I as I may!

(*Portia hands a golden key to the page, who, carrying it on a cushion, kneels before the Prince with it.*)

PORTIA

There, take it, prince: and if my form lie there,
Then I am yours.

(*The Prince unlocks the golden casket.*)

MOROCCO

O, hell! What have we here?
A horrid skull, within whose empty eye
There is a written scroll. I'll read the writing.
(*reading the scroll with some bewilderment*)

All that glisters is not gold;
Often have you heard that told.
Many a man his life hath sold
But my outside to behold.
Gilded tombs do worms enfold. 40
Had you been as wise as bold,
Your answer had not been enscrolled:
"Fare you well, your suit is cold!"

Cold indeed, and labour lost:
Then farewell, heat, and welcome, frost!

Portia, adieu. I have too grieved a heart
To take a tedious leave: thus losers part.
(*Exit with retinue.*)

PORTIA
A gentle riddance. Draw the curtains: go.
Let all of his complexion choose me so! 50

SCENE 7

(*SALARINO, SOLANIO*)

A street in Venice. The busybodies Salarino and Solanio hustle in, happily exchanging the latest gossip.

SALARINO (*excited*)
Why, man, I saw Bassanio under sail.
With him is Gratiano gone along,
And in their ship I'm sure Lorenzo is not.

SOLANIO (*laughing*)
The villain Jew with outcries raised the Duke,
Who went with him to search Bassanio's ship.

SALARINO
He came too late, the ship was under sail.

SOLANIO
I never heard a passion so confused

As the dog Jew did utter in the streets:
(*giving a distorted imitation of Shylock*)
"*My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter!*
Fled with a Christian! O my Christian ducats! 10
Justice! The Law! My ducats, and my daughter!
A sealed bag, two sealed bags of ducats,
And jewels! Two stones, two rich and precious stones,
Stolen by my daughter! Justice! Find the girl!
She hath the stones upon her, and the ducats"

SALARINO (*laughing*)
Why, all the boys in Venice follow him,
Crying his stones, his daughter and his ducats!

SOLANIO
Let good Antonio look he keep his day,
Or he shall pay for this!

SALARINO (*changing to serious voice*)
Marry, well remembered. 20
I reasoned with a Frenchman yesterday
Who told me, in the narrow seas that part
The French and English, there miscarried
A vessel of our country richly fraught...
I thought upon Antonio when he told me,
And wished in silence that it were not his.

SOLANIO
You were best to tell Antonio what you heard—
Yet do not suddenly, for it may grieve him.

SALARINO
A kinder gentleman treads not the earth.
I saw Bassanio and Antonio part, 30
Bassanio told him he would make some speed
Of his return: he answered "*Do not so:*
Spoil not the business for my sake, Bassanio!
As for the Jew's bond which he hath of me,

Let it not enter in your loving mind."
And even there, his eyes being big with tears,
He wrung Bassanio's hand, and so they parted.

SOLANIO
I think he only loves the world for him.
I pray thee, let us go and find him out,
And cheer his heaviness with some delight. 40

SALARINO
Do we so.

SCENE 8

(*NERISSA, PORTIA, ARRAGON, BALTHAZAR*)

Belmont.

Once more in Portia's house. As before, the scene is set for the choosing of the caskets: this time, the Prince of Arragon is the contestant. In Shakespeare's day, the Spaniards were a byword for haughtiness and swagger, and it appears that this Prince was no exception.

NERISSA
Quick, quick, I pray thee, draw the curtain quick:
The Prince of Arragon hath taken his oath,
And comes to do his choosing presently.

(*A page draws the curtain. Almost immediately the trumpeters appear and blow a call to herald the entry of the Prince of Arragon and Portia, with their retinues.*)

PORTIA
Behold, there stand the caskets, noble prince.
If you choose that wherein I am contained
Straight shall our nuptial rites be solemnized.
But if you fail, without more speech, my lord,
You must be gone from hence immediately.

ARRAGON
I am enjoined by oath to observe three things:

First, never to unfold to anyone 10
Which casket 'twas I chose. Next, if I fail
Of the right casket, never in my life
To woo a maid in way of marriage. Lastly,
If I do fail in fortune of my choice,
Immediately to leave you and be gone.

PORTIA

To these injunctions everyone doth swear
That comes to hazard for my worthless self.

ARRAGON

And so have I made promise. Fortune now
To my heart's hope! Gold, silver, and base lead.
"*Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath.*" 20
You shall look fairer, ere *I* give or hazard.
What says the golden chest? Ha! Let me see:
"*Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire.*"
I will not choose what many men desire,
Because I will not jump with common spirits
And rank me with the barbarous multitude.
Why then, to thee, thou silver treasure-house:
Tell me once more what title thou dost bear:
"*Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves.*"
(*Pause.*)
I will assume desert. Give me a key 30
And instantly unlock my fortunes *here.*

(*He is given the silver key, with which he unlocks the silver casket. Silence.*)

PORTIA (*aside, to Nerissa*)

Too long a pause for that which you find there!

ARRAGON

What's here? The portrait of a blinking idiot,
Presenting me a schedule! I will read it.

Seven times tried that judgment is
That did never choose amiss:
There be fools alive, I wis,
Silvered o'er, and so was this.
I will ever be your head:
So, begone, sir: you are sped! 40

How much unlike art thou to Portia!
How much unlike my hopes and my deserts!
"*Who chooseth me shall have as much as he deserves.*"
Did I deserve no more than a fool's head?
Still more fool I shall appear
By the time I linger here.
With one fool's head I came to woo,
But I go away with two!

(*He goes off in high dudgeon, followed by his retinue.*)

PORTIA
Thus hath the candle singed the moth.
O, these deep-thinking fools... when they do choose, 50
They have the wisdom by their wit to lose!

NERISSA
The ancient saying is no heresy:
"*Hanging and wiving go by destiny.*"

PORTIA
Come, draw the curtain, Nerissa.

(*Balthazar enters and makes a sweeping bow.*)

BALTHAZAR (*to Nerissa*)
Where is my lady?

PORTIA (*laughing*)
Here. What would my lord?

BALTHAZAR (*enthusiastically*)
Madam, there is alighted at your gate

A young Venetian, one that comes before
To signify the approaching of his lord,
From whom he bringeth greetings sensible, 60
To wit—besides commends and courteous breath—
Gifts of rich value. Yet I have not seen
So likely an Ambassador of love:
A day in April never came so sweet
To show how costly summer was at hand,
As this fore-spurrer comes before his lord . . .

PORTIA (*laughing*)
No more, I pray thee: I am half afeard
Thou'lt say anon he is some kin to thee,
Thou spend'st such high-day wit in praising him!
Come, come, Nerissa, for I long to see 70
Quick Cupid's post that comes so mannerly!

NERISSA
Bassanio, lord Love, if thy will it be!

ACT III

SCENE 1

(*SOLANIO, SALARINO, SHYLOCK, SERVANT, TUBAL*)

A street in Venice.

(*Enter Solanio and Salarino.*)

SOLANIO
Now, what news on the Rialto?

SALARINO
Why, that Antonio hath a ship of rich cargo wrecked on the narrow seas: the Goodwins, I think they call the place—a very dangerous flat, and fatal, where the carcasses of many a tall ship lie buried.

(*Enter Shylock.*)

How now, Shylock! What news among the merchants?

SHYLOCK (*storming*)

You knew, none so well, none so well as you, of my daughter's flight. 10

SALARINO (*mocking*)

That's certain: I, for my part, knew the tailor that made the wings she flew away with.... But tell us, do you hear whether Antonio have had any loss at sea or not?

SHYLOCK (*more storming*)

There I have another bad match: a bankrupt, a prodigal, who dare scarce show his head on the Rialto! A beggar, that used to come so smugly to the market—let him look to his bond! He was wont to call me usurer—let him look to his bond! He was wont to lend money for a Christian 20 courtesy—let him look to his bond!

SALARINO

Why, I am sure, if he forfeit, thou wilt not take his flesh: what's that good for?

SHYLOCK (*savagely*)

To bait fish withal: if it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge. He hath disgraced me, laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies: and what's his reason? I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affec- 30 tions, passions, fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by

the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?

(*Enter a servant.*)

SERVANT

Gentlemen, my master Antonio is at his house, and desires to speak with you both.

SALARINO

We have been up and down to seek him. 40

(*Enter Tubal.*)

SOLANIO (*aside, to Salarino*)

Here comes another of the tribe: a third cannot be matched, unless the devil himself turn Jew!

(*Exeunt Solanio, Salarino and Servant.*)

SHYLOCK

How now, Tubal! What news from Genoa? Hast thou found my daughter?

TUBAL

I often came where I did hear of her, but cannot find her.

SHYLOCK

Why there, there, there! A diamond gone, cost me two thousand ducats in Frankfort! The curse never fell upon our nation till now: two thousand ducats in that, and other precious, precious jewels. 50 I would my daughter were dead at my foot—and the jewels in her ear! Would she were hearsed at my foot—and the ducats in her coffin! No news of them? Why, so: and I know not what's spent in the search! Why, thou—loss upon loss! The thief gone with so much

(*muttering figures and counting on his fingers*)

and so much . . . to find the thief, and no satisfaction, no revenge, nor no ill luck stirring but what

lights on my shoulders: no sighs, but of my breathing: no tears, but of my shedding. 60

TUBAL
Yes, other men have ill luck too: Antonio, as I heard in Genoa—

SHYLOCK (*eagerly*)
What, what, what? Ill luck, ill luck?

TUBAL
—hath an argosy cast away, coming from Tripolis.

SHYLOCK (*delighted*)
I thank God! I thank God! Is it true? Is it true?

TUBAL
I spoke with some of the sailors that escaped the wreck.

SHYLOCK
I thank thee, good Tubal. Good news, good news, ha, ha! Where? In Genoa?

TUBAL
Your daughter spent in Genoa, as I heard, one 70
night, fourscore ducats....

SHYLOCK (*wincing*)
Ah, thou stick'st a dagger in me: I shall never see my gold again. Fourscore ducats at a sitting! Fourscore ducats!

TUBAL
There came some of Antonio's creditors in my company to Venice, that swear he cannot choose but break.

HYLOCK (*chuckling*)
I am very glad of it. I'll plague him! I'll torture him! I am glad of it!

TUBAL

One of them showed me a ring that he had of your daughter for a monkey.... 80

SHYLOCK (*furious*)

Out upon her! Thou torturest me, Tubal! It was my turquoise, I had it from Leah when I was a bachelor: I would not have given it for a wilderness of monkeys!

TUBAL

But Antonio is certainly undone.

SHYLOCK (*restored to good spirits again*)

Nay, that's true, that's very true. Go, Tubal, fee me an officer: bespeak him a fortnight before. I will have the heart of him, if he forfeit, for, were he out of Venice, I can make what merchandise I will. Go, go, Tubal, and meet me at our synagogue, go, good Tubal, at our synagogue, Tubal! 90

SCENE 2 * * *

(*BASSANIO, PORTIA, NERISSA, GRATIANO, LORENZO, JESSICA, SOLANIO*)

Belmont. A room in Portia's house. Bassanio has arrived in Belmont and has introduced himself to Portia as yet another suitor. This time, as might be expected in such a romance as this, Portia feels strongly attracted to the new contestant; indeed, when this scene begins, we find her asking Bassanio to delay his choice of the caskets in case he should be unsuccessful!

PORTIA

I pray you, tarry. Pause a day or two
Before you hazard, for in choosing wrong,
I lose your company: therefore, forbear
awhile . . .
I would detain you here some month or two
Before you venture for me.

BASSANIO

Let me choose,
For as I am, I live upon the rack!
O, let me to my fortune and the caskets!

PORTIA

Away then! I am locked in one of them:
If you do love me, you will find me out.
Nerissa and the rest, stand all aloof: 10
Let music sound while he doth make his choice,
Then, if he lose, he makes a swan-like end,
Fading in music.

(*A boy comes forward and sings softly to the music of his lute. Bassanio walks up and down in front of the caskets, deep in thought, occasionally pausing to handle one of them. Is there, in the words of the song, a hint to help him in his choice?*)

SONG

Tell me, where is Fancy bred,
Or in the heart, or in the head?
How begot, how nourished?
Reply, Reply.

It is engendered in the eyes,
With gazing fed; and fancy dies
In the cradle where it lies. 20
Let us all ring Fancy's knell:
I'll begin it—Ding, dong, bell.
(*ALL*)
Ding, dong, bell.

BASSANIO (*musingly*)

So may the outward shows be least themselves:
The world is oft deceived with ornament.
Therefore, thou gaudy gold,
Hard food for Midas, I will none of thee;
Nor none of thee, thou pale and common drudge
'Tween man and man. But thou, thou meagre lead,

Which rather threatenest than dost promise aught, 30
Thy paleness moves me more than eloquence,
And here choose I: joy be the consequence!

(A page comes forward, unlocks the leaden casket, and hands it to Bassanio, who raises the lid and takes out a picture.)

What find I here. . . fair Portia's counterfeit!
(examining closely)
Here are severed lips,
Parted with sugar breath; here in her hairs
The painter plays the spider, and hath woven
A golden mesh to entrap the hearts of men!
(finding a scroll in the casket, he reads it aloud)

You that chose not by the view,
Chance as fair and choose as true!
Since this fortune falls to you, 40
Be content and seek no new.
If you be well pleased with this
And hold your fortune for your bliss,
Turn you where your lady is
And claim her with a loving kiss.

A gentle scroll. Fair lady, by your leave,
(He kisses Portia)
I come by note, to give and to receive.

PORTIA (simply)
You see me, Lord Bassanio, where I stand,
Such as I am, and the full sum of me
Is an unlessoned girl, unschooled, unpractised: 50
Happy in this, she is not yet so old
But she may learn: happier than this,
She is not bred so dull but she can learn:
Happiest of all in that her gentle spirit
Commits itself to yours to be directed.
Myself and what is mine to you and yours
Is now converted. But now, I was the lord
Of this fair mansion, master of my servants,

Queen o'er myself; and even now, but now,
This house, these servants, and this same myself 60
Are yours, my lord. I give them with this ring,
(*giving a ring from her finger to Bassanio*)
Which, when you part from, lose, or give away,
Let it presage the ruin of your love.

BASSANIO
Madam, you have bereft me of all words.
But when this ring
(*holding out the ring, and placing on his finger*)
Parts from this finger, then parts life from hence:
O, then be bold to say, "*Bassanio's dead!*"

NERISSA (*coming forward and curtseying*)
My lord and lady, it is now our time,
That have stood by and seen our wishes prosper,
To cry, good joy. Good joy, my lord and lady! 70

GRATIANO (*bowing*)
My Lord Bassanio and my gentle lady,
I wish you all the joy that you can wish;
And when your honours mean to solemnize
The bargain of your faith, I do beseech you,
Even at that time I may be married too!

BASSANIO
With all my heart, if thou canst get a wife!

GRATIANO
I thank your lordship, you have got me one!
My eyes, my lord, can look as swift as yours.
You saw the mistress, I beheld the maid.
Your fortune stood upon the caskets there, 80
And so did mine too, as the matter falls,
For, wooing here until I sweat again,
And swearing till my very roof was dry,
I got a promise of this fair one here
To have her love, provided that your fortune
Achieved her mistress.

PORTIA

Is this true, Nerissa?

NERISSA

Madam, it is, so you stand pleased withal.

BASSANIO

And do you, Gratiano, mean good faith?

GRATIANO

Yes, faith, my lord. 90

BASSANIO

Our feast shall be much honoured in your marriage.

GRATIANO

But who comes here? Lorenzo and his infidel?
What, and my old Venetian friend, Solanio?
(*Enter Lorenzo, Jessica and Solanio, in travelling dress.*)

BASSANIO

Lorenzo, and Solanio, welcome hither!
By your leave,
(*turning to Portia*)
I bid my most true friends and countrymen,
Sweet Portia, welcome.

PORTIA

So do I, my lord:
They are entirely welcome.

LORENZO

I thank your honour. For my part, my lord, 100
My purpose was not to have seen you here;
But meeting with Solanio by the way,
He did entreat me, past all saying nay,
To come with him along.

SOLANIO

I did, my lord,
And I have reason for it. Signior Antonio
Commends himself to you.
(*He gives Bassanio a letter*)

BASSANIO

Ere I ope his letter,
I pray you, tell me how my good friend doth.

SOLANIO

Not sick, my lord, unless it be in mind;
Nor well, unless in mind; his letter there
Will show you his estate. 110
(*Bassanio opens and reads the letter.*)

GRATIANO (*heartily*)

Nerissa, greet yon stranger: bid her welcome.
(*Nerissa goes to Jessica.*)
How doth that royal merchant, good Antonio?
I know he will be glad of our success:
We are the Jasons, we have won the fleece.

SOLANIO

I would you had won the fleece that he hath lost!

PORTIA (*who has been watching Bassanio's obvious dismay as he reads*)

There are some shrewd contents in yon same paper,
That steal the colour from Bassanio's cheek:
Some dear friend dead, else nothing in the world
Could turn so much the constitution
Of any constant man. What, worse, and worse! 120
With leave, Bassanio: I am half yourself,
And I must freely have the half of anything
That this same paper brings you.

BASSANIO

O, sweet Portia!
Here are a few of the unpleasantest words

That ever blotted paper. Gentle lady,
When I did first impart my love to you,
I freely told you all the wealth I had
Ran in my veins, I was a gentleman,
And then I told you true—and yet, dear lady,
Rating myself at nothing, you shall see 130
How much I was a braggart. When I told you
My state was nothing, I should then have told you
That it was worse than nothing; for, indeed,
I have engaged myself to a dear friend,
Engaged my friend unto his enemy,
To feed my means. Here is a letter, lady:
The paper as the body of my friend,
And every word in it a gaping wound,
Issuing life-blood. But is it true, Solanio?
Have all his ventures failed? What, not one hit? 140
From Tripolis, from Mexico, and England,
From Lisbon, Barbary, and India,
And not one vessel 'scape the dreadful touch
Of merchant-marring rocks?

SOLANIO

Not one, my lord.
Besides, it doth appear, that if he had
The money present to discharge the Jew,
He would not take it. Never did I know
A creature that did bear the shape of man
So keen and greedy to confound a man.
The Duke himself, and the magnificos 150
Of most importance, have persuaded with him,
But none can drive him from the cruel plea
Of forfeiture, of justice, and his bond.

JESSICA

When I was with him, I have heard him swear
That he would rather have Antonio's flesh
Than twenty times the value of the sum
That he did owe him!

PORTIA (*to Bassanio*)
Is it your dear friend that is thus in trouble?

BASSANIO
The dearest friend to me, the kindest man
In doing courtesies, and one in whom 160
The ancient Roman honour more appears
Than any that draws breath in Italy.

PORTIA
What sum owes he the Jew?

BASSANIO
For me, three thousand ducats.

PORTIA
What, no more?
Pay him six thousand, and redeem the bond:
Double six thousand, and then treble that,
Before a friend of this description
Shall lose a hair through my Bassanio's fault.
First go with me to church and call me wife,
And then away to Venice to your friend, 170
For never shall you lie by Portia's side
With an unquiet soul. You shall have gold
To pay the petty debt twenty times over:
When it is paid, bring your true friend along.
My maid Nerissa and myself meantime
Will live as maids and widows. Come, away!—
For you shall hence upon your wedding-day.
Bid your friends welcome, show a merry cheer:
Since you are dear bought, I will love you dear. . .
But let me hear the letter of your friend. 180

BASSANIO
Sweet Bassanio, my ships have all miscarried, my creditors grow cruel, my estate is very low, my bond to the Jew is forfeit; and, since in paying it, it is impossible I should live, all debts are cleared between

you and I, if I might but see you at my death. Notwithstanding, use your pleasure: if your love do not persuade you to come, let not my letter.

PORTIA

O love, dispatch all business, and be gone!

BASSANIO

Since I have your good leave to go away, 190
I will make haste, but, till I come again,
No bed shall e'er be guilty of my stay,
Nor rest be interposer 'twixt us twain.

SCENE 3

(*SHYLOCK, SALARINO, ANTONIO*)

Venice: a street near the prison.

The Gaoler is leading Antonio in chains. Antonio has evidently requested to be taken out in order to seek Shylock and try to come to some arrangement with him. Shylock, of course, will not for a moment consider anything but the terms of the bond.

SHYLOCK (*with cruel scorn*)

Gaoler, look to him: tell not me of mercy—
This is the fool that lent out money gratis!
Gaoler, look to him!

ANTONIO

Hear me yet, good Shylock.

SHYLOCK (*grimly*)

I'll have my bond: speak not against my bond:
I have sworn an oath that I will have my bond.
Thou call'dst me dog before thou hadst a cause,
But, since I am a dog, beware my fangs:
The Duke shall grant me justice. I do wonder,
Thou stupid gaoler, that thou art so rash
To come abroad with him at his request! 10

ANTONIO
I pray thee, hear me speak!

SHYLOCK
I'll have my bond: I will not hear thee speak.
I'll have my bond, and therefore speak no more . . .
I'll have no speaking—I will have my bond.
(*Exit Shylock.*)

SALARINO
He is the most impenetrable cur
That ever dwelt with men!

ANTONIO
Let him alone:
I'll follow him no more with bootless prayers.
He seeks my life: his reason well I know.
I oft delivered from his forfeitures
Many that have at times made moan to me— 20
Therefore he hates me.

SALARINO
I am sure the Duke
Will never grant this forfeiture to hold.

ANTONIO
The Duke cannot deny the course of law,
For fear of all the commerce strangers have
With us in Venice. If it be denied,
'Twill much impeach the justice of the state,
Since that the trade and profit of the city
Consisteth of all nations. Therefore, go:
These griefs and losses have so bated me,
That I shall hardly spare a pound of flesh 30
Tomorrow to my bloody creditor.
Well, gaoler, on! Pray God, Bassanio come
To see me pay his debt, and then I care not!

SCENE 4

(PORTIA, NERISSA, LORENZO, JESSICA, BALTHAZAR)

Belmont. A room in Portia's house.

Portia has meanwhile been told about Antonio's bargain with the Jew. Her quick mind seizes upon a flaw in the wording of the bond which Shylock overlooked, and she determines to help Antonio. Her plan involves appearing in court in Venice, disguised as a barrister. While she is away, she will leave Lorenzo in charge of her household.

At the beginning of the scene, Portia, accompanied by Nerissa, is speaking to Lorenzo. Jessica and Balthazar are also present.

PORTIA

Lorenzo, I commit into your hands
The husbandry and manage of my house
Until my lord's return. For mine own part,
I have towards heaven breathed a secret vow
To live in prayer and contemplation,
Only attended by Nerissa here,
Until her husband and my lord's return.
There is a monastery two miles off,
And there will we abide.

LORENZO (*bowing*)

With all my heart
I shall obey you in all fair commands. 10

PORTIA

My people do already know my mind,
And will acknowledge you and Jessica
In place of Lord Bassanio and myself:
So fare you well till we shall meet again.

LORENZO

Fair thoughts and happy hours attend on you!

JESSICA

I wish your ladyship all heart's content.

PORTIA

I thank you for your wish, and am well pleased
To wish it back on you: fare you well, Jessica.
(*Exeunt Jessica and Lorenzo.*)
(*urgent and secretively*)
Now, Balthazar,
As I have ever found thee honest-true, 20
So let me find thee still. Take this same letter
In speed to Padua. See thou render this
Into my cousin's hand, Doctor Bellario,
And, look, what notes and garments he doth give thee,
Bring them, I pray thee, to the common ferry
Which trades to Venice. Waste no time in words,
But get thee gone: I shall be there before thee.

BALTHAZAR

Madam, I go with all convenient speed.
(*Exit.*)

PORTIA

Come on, Nerissa: I have work in hand
That you yet know not of. We'll see our husbands 30
Before they think of us.

NERISSA (*mystified*)

Shall they see us?

PORTIA (*smiling*)

They shall, Nerissa, but in such a habit
They shall not know us. I'll hold thee any wager,
When we are both accoutred like young men,
I'll prove the prettier fellow of the two,
And wear my dagger with the braver grace
Like a fine bragging youth, and tell quaint lies
How honourable ladies sought my love—
But come: I'll tell thee all my whole device
When I am in my coach, which stays for us 40
At the park gate; and therefore haste away,
For we must measure twenty miles today.

ACT IV

SCENE 1 * * *

(*DUKE, ANTONIO, BASSANIO, GRATIANO, SALARINO, SHYLOCK, PORTIA, NERISSA*)

Venice. A court of justice.

This scene is among the best known of all that Shakespeare wrote, and thus, we might say, in the world. Like all well-written courtroom scenes, it goes with a special vitality on the stage. Something of the tension may be had in the classroom if we arrange for the Duke to be at the back of the room, Centre, with Antonio front, Left, and Shylock front, Right. When their names are called, the two latter should stand up and turn round to face the Duke and the rest of the court, remaining thus throughout the scene. Portia, when she arrives, will take a seat by the Duke: of course, she will turn to Shylock and Antonio when talking to them. On the same side of the room as Antonio, and as near to him as courtroom etiquette permits, would be his friends and supporters: on the other side, it is not unreasonable to imagine, would be Tubal and various other Jewish supporters of Shylock.

On the stage, when the curtain rises, the court is filled except for the judicial bench. To silence the general chatter a trumpet blows: everyone stands up while the Duke and Magnificos of Venice enter and take their places on the bench.

DUKE
Well, is Antonio here?

ANTONIO
Ready, so please your Grace.

DUKE
I am sorry for thee: thou art come to answer
A stony adversary, an inhuman wretch
Incapable of pity, void and empty
From any dram of mercy.

ANTONIO (*resignedly*)

I have heard
Your Grace hath ta'en great pains to moderate
His rigorous course; but since he stands unmoved,
And that no lawful means can carry me
Out of his envy's reach, I do oppose 10
My patience to his fury, and am armed
To suffer with a quietness of spirit
The very tyranny and rage of his.

DUKE

Go one, and call the Jew into the court.

SALARINO

He's ready at the door: he comes, my lord.
(*Enter Shylock. He carries with him a bag, the contents of which we shall discover later.*)

DUKE

Make room, and let him stand before our face.
Shylock, the world thinks, and I think so, too,
That thou but lead'st this fashion of thy malice
To the last hour of act...and then, 'tis thought,
Thou'lt show thy mercy and remorse more strange 20
Than is thy strange-apparent cruelty.
And where thou now exact'st the penalty—
Which is a pound of this poor merchant's flesh—
Thou wilt not only waive the forfeiture,
But, touched with human gentleness and love,
Forgive a portion of the principal,
Glancing an eye of pity on his losses.
(*short pause*)
We all expect a gentle answer, Jew.

SHYLOCK (*coldly, then warming to anger*)

I have informed your Grace of what I purpose;
And by our holy Sabbath have I sworn 30
To have the due and forfeit of my bond.
If you deny it, let the danger light
Upon your charter and your city's freedom.

You'll ask me, why I rather choose to have
A weight of carrion flesh than to receive
Three thousand ducats: I'll not answer that,
But say it is my humour! Is it answered?
What if my house be troubled with a rat,
And I be pleased to give ten thousand ducats
To have it baned? Well, are you answered yet? 40
I cannot give a reason, nor I will not,
More than a lodged hate and a certain loathing
I bear Antonio, that I follow thus
A losing suit against him. Are you answered?

BASSANIO (*sharply*)
This is no answer, thou unfeeling man,
To excuse the current of thy cruelty.

SHYLOCK (*aloof*)
I am not bound to please thee with my answer.

BASSANIO
Do all men kill the things they do not love?

SHYLOCK
Hates any man the thing he would not kill?

BASSANIO
Every offence is not a hate at first. 50

SHYLOCK (*with sudden venom*)
What, wouldst thou have a serpent sting thee
twice?

ANTONIO
I pray you, think you question with the Jew . . .
You may as well go stand upon the beach
And bid the ocean bate his usual height;
You may as well ask question of the wolf,
Why he hath made the ewe bleat for the lamb,
As seek to soften that—than which what's
harder?—
His Jewish heart! Therefore I do beseech you,

Make no more offers, use no further means,
Let me have judgment, and the Jew his will. 60

BASSANIO
For thy three thousand ducats, here is six!

SHYLOCK (*drawing himself up*)
If every ducat in six thousand ducats
Were in six parts, and every part a ducat,
I would not draw them: I would have my bond.

DUKE
How shalt thou hope for mercy, rendering none?

SHYLOCK (*craftily*)
What judgment shall I dread, doing no wrong?
The pound of flesh which I demand of him
Is dearly bought: 'tis mine and I will have it.
If you deny me, fie upon your law—
There is no force in the decrees of Venice! 70
I stand for judgment: answer, shall I have it?

DUKE
Upon my power I may dismiss this court,
Unless Bellario, a learnèd doctor,
Whom I have sent for to determine this,
Comes here today.

SALARINO
My lord, here stays without
A messenger with letters from the doctor,
New come from Padua.

DUKE
Bring us the letters; call the messenger.

BASSANIO (*encouragingly*)
Good cheer, Antonio! What, man: courage yet!
The Jew shall have my flesh, blood, bones and all, 80
Ere thou shalt lose for me one drop of blood.

ANTONIO (*dispirited*)
I am a tainted wether of the flock,
Meetest for death. The weakest kind of fruit
Drops earliest to the ground—and so let me.
(*Enter Nerissa, disguised as a lawyer's clerk.*)

DUKE
Came you from Padua, from Bellario?

NERISSA
From both, my lord. Bellario greets your Grace.
(*She presents the Duke with a letter.*)

BASSANIO (*to Shylock, who has from time to time been rubbing his knife on the sole of his shoe*)
Why dost thou whet thy knife so earnestly?

SHYLOCK
To cut the forfeiture from that bankrupt there!

GRATIANO (*angrily*)
Not on thy sole, but on thy *soul*, harsh Jew,
Thou mak'st thy knife keen. But no metal can, 90
No, not the hangman's axe, bear half the keenness
Of thy sharp envy. Can no prayers pierce thee?

SHYLOCK
No, none that thou hast wit enough to make!

GRATIANO
O, be thou damned, inexecrable dog!

SHYLOCK (*with cool sarcasm*)
Till thou canst rail the seal from off my bond,
Thou but offend'st thy lungs to speak so loud:
Repair thy wit, good youth, or it will fall
To cureless ruin. I stand here for law.

DUKE (*looking up from letter*)
This letter from Bellario doth commend
A young and learnèd doctor to our court. 100
Where is he?

NERISSA

He attendeth here hard by,
To know your answer, whether you'll admit him.

DUKE

With all my heart: some three or four of you
Go give him courteous conduct to this place.
Meantime the court shall hear Bellario's letter.

(*Exeunt attendants.*)

NERISSA (*reading the letter*)

Your Grace shall understand that at the receipt of your letter I am very ill. When your messenger came, a young lawyer of Rome, Balthazar, was visiting me, and I made him familiar with the facts 110 *of the dispute between the Jew and Antonio the merchant. We consulted many books together, and I informed him exactly of my opinion of the case, so that he comes to you now, instead of me, to fulfil your Grace's request. I pray you not to let his lack of years worry you: I never knew so young a body with so old a head. I leave him to your gracious acceptance, knowing that his conduct shall more impress you than my commendations.*

DUKE

You hear the learnèd Bellario, what he writes: 120
And here, I take it, is the doctor come.

(*Enter Portia, disguised as a young doctor of law.*)

Give me your hand. Came you from old Bellario?

PORTIA

I did, my lord.

DUKE

You are welcome: take your place.
Are you acquainted with the difference
That holds the present question in the court?

PORTIA
I am informèd thoroughly of the cause.
Which is the merchant here, and which the Jew?

DUKE
Antonio and old Shylock, both stand forth.

PORTIA
Is your name Shylock?

SHYLOCK
Shylock is my name.

PORTIA
Of a strange nature is the suit you follow: 130
Yet in such manner that Venetian law
Cannot prevent you as you do proceed.
(*to Antonio*)
You stand within his danger, do you not?

ANTONIO
Ay, so he says.

PORTIA
Do you admit the bond?

ANTONIO
I do.

PORTIA (*simply*)
Then must the Jew be merciful!

SHYLOCK
On what compulsion *must* I? Tell me that!

PORTIA
The quality of mercy is not *strained*,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blessed:
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes. 140

'Tis mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes
The thronèd monarch better than his crown.
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this sceptred sway,
It is enthronèd in the hearts of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself,
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew, 150
Though justice be thy plea, consider this,
That in the course of justice none of us
Should see salvation. We do pray for mercy,
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy . . . I have spoke thus much
To mitigate the justice of thy plea,
Which, if thou follow, this strict court of Venice
Must needs give sentence 'gainst the merchant there.

SHYLOCK
My deeds upon my head! I crave the law,
The penalty and forfeit of my bond. 160

PORTIA (*to Duke*)
Is he not able to discharge the money?

BASSANIO (*eagerly*)
Yes, here I tender it for him in the court;
Yea, twice the sum: if that will not suffice,
I will be bound to pay it ten times o'er,
On forfeit of my hands, my head, my heart.
If this will not suffice, it must appear
That malice bears down truth. And, I beseech you,
Bend once the law to your authority:
To do a great right, do a little wrong,
And curb this cruel devil of his will. 170

PORTIA (*firmly*)
It must not be. There is no power in Venice
Can alter a decree establishèd.
'Twill be recorded for a precedent,
And many an error by the same example
Will rush into the state. It cannot be.

SHYLOCK (*at first anxious, while Portia was speaking, then approving, and now triumphant*)
A Daniel come to judgment! Yea, a Daniel!
O wise young judge, how I do honour thee!

PORTIA
I pray you, let me look upon the bond.

SHYLOCK (*eagerly*)
Here 'tis, most reverend doctor: here it is!

PORTIA (*in a neutral voice*)
Shylock, there's thrice thy money offered thee. 180

SHYLOCK (*excited*)
An oath! An oath! I have an oath in heaven:
Shall I lay perjury upon my soul?
No, not for Venice.

PORTIA (*impartial*)
Well, this bond is forfeit,
And lawfully by this the Jew may claim
A pound of flesh, to be by him cut off
Nearest the merchant's heart....Be merciful:
Take thrice thy money: bid me tear the bond.

SHYLOCK
When it is paid according to the contract!
It doth appear you are a worthy judge;
You know the law, your exposition 190
Hath been most sound: I charge you by the law,
Whreof you are a well-deserving pillar,
Proceed to judgment. By my soul I swear

There is no power in the tongue of man
To alter me: I stay here on my bond.

ANTONIO (*tortured by the tension*)
Most heartily I do beseech the court
To give the judgment!

PORTIA (*impartial*)
Why then, thus it is:
You must prepare your bosom for his knife.

SHYLOCK (*in ecstasy*)
O, noble judge! O, excellent young man! 200

PORTIA
For, the intent and purpose of the law
Bears full relation to the penalty,
Which here appeareth due upon the bond.

SHYLOCK (*triumphant*)
'Tis very true! O wise and upright judge!
How much more older art thou than thy looks!

PORTIA
Therefore lay bare your bosom.

SHYLOCK (*chuckling*)
Ay, '*his breast*':
So says the bond, doth it not, noble judge?
'*Nearest his heart*': those are the very words!

PORTIA
It is so. Are there scales to weigh the flesh?

SHYLOCK (*producing a balance from his bag, with great excitement*)
I have them ready! 210

PORTIA
Have by some surgeon, Shylock, on your charge,
To stop his wounds, lest he do bleed to death.

SHYLOCK
Is it so nominated in the bond?
(*Takes the bond and pretends to scrutinize it.*)

PORTIA
It is not so expressed, but what of that?
'Twere good you do so much for charity.

SHYLOCK (*holding out the bond to Portia, gleefully*)
I cannot find it: 'tis not in the bond!

PORTIA
You, merchant, have you anything to say?

ANTONIO
But little: I am armed and well prepared.
Give me your hand, Bassanio: fare you well!
Grieve not that I am fallen to this for you.
Commend me to your honourable wife:
Tell her the story of Antonio's end
Say how I loved you, speak me fair in death,
And, when the tale is told, bid her be judge
Whether Bassanio had not once a love!
Repent not *you* that you shall lose your friend,
And *he* repents not that he pays your debt;
For, if the Jew do cut but deep enough,
I'll pay it instantly with all my heart

BASSANIO (*urgent and desperate*)
Antonio, I am married to a wife 230
Which is as dear to me as life itself,
But life itself, my wife, and all the world,
Are not with me esteemed above thy life.
I would lose all, ay, sacrifice them all,
Here to this devil, to deliver you.

PORTIA (*half aloud*)
Your wife would give you little thanks for that,
If she were by to hear you make the offer!

GRATIANO
I have a wife, whom, I protest, I love:
I would she were in heaven, so she could
Entreat some power to change this currish Jew! 240

NERISSA (*half aloud*)
'Tis well you offer it behind her back;
The wish would else make an unquiet house!

SHYLOCK (*impatiently*)
We trifle time: I pray thee, pursue sentence.

PORTIA (*formally*)
A pound of that same merchant's flesh is thine:
The court awards it, and the law doth give it.

SHYLOCK
Most learnèd judge! A sentence! Come, prepare!
(*He turns to Antonio and begins to unbutton his tunic.*)

PORTIA (*softly at first*)
Tarry a little: there is something else.
This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood.
The words expressly are '*a pound of flesh*'.
Then take thy bond, take thou thy pound of flesh, 250
But, in the cutting it, if thou dost shed
One drop of Christian blood, thy lands and goods
Are, by the laws of Venice, confiscate
Unto the state of Venice!

GRATIANO (*whose face, during Portia's speech, has registered every emotion from amazement to delight*)
O upright judge! Mark, Jew: O learnèd judge!

SHYLOCK (*getting the words out with difficulty*)
Is that the law?

PORTIA (*impartial*)
Thyself shalt see the act;

For, as thou urgest justice, be assured
Thou shalt have justice—more than thou desirest!

GRATIANO
O learnèd judge! Mark, Jew: a learnèd judge!

SHYLOCK (*sullenly*)
I take this offer then: pay the bond thrice, 260
And let the Christian go!

BASSANIO (*eagerly*)
Here is the money!

PORTIA
Soft!
The Jew shall have all justice: soft! No haste!
He shall have nothing but the penalty.

GRATIANO (*jumping up and down with joy*)
O Jew! An upright judge, a learnèd judge!

PORTIA
Therefore prepare thee to cut off the flesh.
Shed thou no blood; nor cut thou less, nor more,
But just a pound of flesh. If thou takest more,
Or less, than a just pound, be it but so much 270
As the division of the twentieth part
Of one poor scruple, nay, if the scale do turn
But in the estimation of a hair,
Thou diest and all thy goods are confiscate!

GRATIANO
A second Daniel, a Daniel, Jew!
Now, infidel, I have *thee* on the hip!

PORTIA
Why doth the Jew pause? Take thy forfeiture!

SHYLOCK (*mutters*)
Give me my principal, and let me go.

BASSANIO (*again eagerly*)
I have it ready for thee: here it is.
PORTIA
He hath refused it in the open court: 280
He shall have merely justice and his bond.
GRATIANO
A Daniel, still say I; a second Daniel!
I thank thee, Jew, for teaching me that word!
PORTIA
Thou shalt have nothing but the forfeiture,
To be so taken at thy peril, Jew.
SHYLOCK
Why, then the devil give him good of it!
I'll stay no longer question.
(*Turns towards door*)
PORTIA (*softly*)
Tarry, Jew.
The law hath yet another hold on you.
It is enacted in the laws of Venice,
If it be proved against an alien 290
That by direct or indirect attempts
He seek the life of any citizen,
The party 'gainst the which he doth contrive
Shall seize one half his goods; the other half
Comes to the privy coffer of the state,
And the offender's life lies in the mercy
Of the Duke only, 'gainst all other voice.
In which predicament, I say, thou standest:
Down, therefore, and beg mercy of the Duke!
DUKE
That thou shalt see the difference of our spirits, 300
I pardon thee thy life before thou ask it.
For half thy wealth, it is Antonio's;
The other half comes to the general state,
Which humbleness may alter to a fine.

PORTIA
Ay, for the state: not for Antonio.

SHYLOCK (*bitterly*)
Nay, take my life and all, pardon not that!
You take my house when you do take the prop
That doth sustain my house; you take my life
When you do take the means whereby I live.

PORTIA
What mercy can *you* render *him*, Antonio? 310

GRATIANO
A halter gratis: nothing else, for God's sake!

ANTONIO
So please my lord the Duke, and all the court,
To quit the fine for one half of his goods,
I am content, so he will let me have
The other half in loan, to render it,
Upon his death, unto the gentleman
That lately stole his daughter—
Two things provided more: that, for this favour,
He presently become a Christian;
The other, that he do record a gift, 320
Here in the court, of all he dies possessed,
Unto his son Lorenzo, and his daughter.

DUKE
He shall do this, or else I do recant
The pardon that I late pronouncèd here.

PORTIA
Art thou contented, Jew? What dost thou say?

SHYLOCK (*softly*)
I am content.

PORTIA
Clerk, draw a deed of gift.

SHYLOCK (*softly*)
I pray you give me leave to go from hence:
I am not well. Send the deed after me,
And I will sign it.

DUKE
Get thee gone, but do it.
(*Shylock stumbles out of the court, supported by Tubal.*)

DUKE (*to Portia*)
Sir, I entreat you home with me to dinner. 330

PORTIA
I humbly do desire your Grace of pardon.
I must away this night toward Padua,
And it is meet I presently set forth.

DUKE
I am sorry that your leisure serves you not.
Antonio, gratify this gentleman,
For, in my mind, you are much bound to him.
(*Exeunt Duke, Magnificos and attendants.*)

BASSANIO (*handing money bag to Portia*)
Most worthy gentleman, I and my friend
Have by your wisdom been this day acquitted
Of grievous penalties, in lieu whereof,
Three thousand ducats, due unto the Jew, 340
We freely pay your courteous pains withal.

ANTONIO (*gratefully*)
And stand indebted, over and above,
In love and service to you evermore.

PORTIA (*returning bag, much to Bassanio's amazement*)
He is well paid that is well satisfied,
And I, delivering you, am satisfied,
And therein do account myself well paid.
I pray you, know me when we meet again:
I wish you well, and so I take my leave.

BASSANIO (*urgently*)
In truth, dear sir, I must persuade you further:
Take some remembrance of us, as a tribute, 350
Not as a fee. Grant me two things, I pray you:
Not to deny me, and to pardon me.

PORTIA
You press me far, and therefore I will yield.
(*to Antonio*)
Give me your gloves, I'll wear them for your sake;
(*to Bassanio, who is idly twisting a ring on his finger*)
And, for your love, I'll take this ring from you.
(*Portia reaches towards the ring, but Bassanio quickly withdraws his hand.*)
Do not withdraw your hand, I'll take no more:
And you in love shall not deny me this!

BASSANIO (*nervously*)
This ring, good sir? Alas, it is a trifle;
I will not shame myself to give you this!

PORTIA (*firmly*)
I will have nothing else but only this; 360
And now methinks I have a mind to it!

BASSANIO
There's more depends on this than on the value.
The dearest ring in Venice will I give you,
And find it out by proclamation—
But for this one, I pray you, pardon me.

PORTIA (*cuttingly*)
I see, sir, you are liberal in offers:
You taught me first to beg, and now methinks
You teach me how a beggar should be answered!

BASSANIO
Good sir, this ring was given me by my wife;
And, when she put it on, she made me vow 370
That I should never sell nor give nor lose it!

PORTIA (*still scornful*)
That 'scuse serves many men to save their gifts!
An if your wife be not a mad-woman,
And know how well I have deserved the ring,
She would not hold out enemy for ever,
For giving it to me. Well, peace be with you!
(*Exeunt Portia and Nerissa.*)

ANTONIO (*appealingly*)
My Lord Bassanio, let him have the ring:
Let his deservings and my love withal
Be valued 'gainst your wife's commandment!

BASSANIO (*relenting*)
Go, Gratiano: run and overtake him; 380
Give him the ring, and bring him, if thou canst,
Unto Antonio's house. Away! Make haste.
(*Exit Gratiano.*)
Come, you and I will thither presently,
And in the morning early will we both
Fly toward Belmont. Come, Antonio.

SCENE 2

(*PORTIA, NERISSA, GRATIANO*)

A street in Venice.
Portia and Nerissa, in the street, are soon overtaken by Gratiano.

PORTIA
Inquire the Jew's house out, give him this deed,
And let him sign it. We'll away tonight,
And be a day before our husbands home:
This deed will be well welcome to Lorenzo.
(*Enter Gratiano.*)

GRATIANO

Fair sir, you are well o'ertaken.
My Lord Bassanio, upon more advice,
Hath sent you here this ring, and doth entreat
Your company at dinner.

PORTIA

That cannot be.
His ring I do accept most thankfully,
And so, I pray you, tell him. Furthermore, 10
I pray you, show my youth old Shylock's house.

GRATIANO

That will I do.

NERISSA

Sir, I would speak with you.
(*aside to Portia*)
I'll see if I can get *my* husband's ring,
Which I did make him swear to keep for ever!

PORTIA (*smiling*)

Thou mayst, I warrant. We shall have fine swearing
That they did give the rings away to men—
But we'll outface them, and outswear them too!
Away, make haste! Thou knowest where I will tarry.

NERISSA

Come, good sir, will you show me to this house?

ACT V

SCENE 1 * * *

(*LORENZO, JESSICA, STEPHANO, PORTIA, NERISSA, BASSANIO, ANTONIO, GRATIANO*)

Belmont. The garden in front of Portia's house.

The country setting and peaceful atmosphere of this scene present a perfect contrast with the courtroom in Venice. Remembering that practically no scenery or artificial lighting was used in Shakespeare's theatre, can you discover, from the first part of this act, how he was so successful in managing without them?

Lorenzo and Jessica, in splendid costumes, are walking hand in hand, looking at the sky.

LORENZO (*with feeling*)

The moon shines bright: in such a night as this,
When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees
And they did make no noise, in such a night
Troilus, methinks, mounted the Trojan walls
And sighed his soul toward the Grecian tents,
Where Cressid lay that night.

JESSICA (*taking her tone from Lorenzo*)

In such a night
Did Thisbe fearfully o'ertrip the dew,
And saw the lion's shadow ere himself,
And ran dismayed away.

LORENZO (*smiling*)

In such a night
Did Jessica steal from the wealthy Jew, 10
And with an unthrift love did run from Venice,
As far as Belmont.

JESSICA (*smiling*)

In such a night
Did young Lorenzo swear he loved her well,

Stealing her soul with many vows of faith,
And ne'er a true one!

LORENZO (*smiling back*)
In such a night
Did pretty Jessica, like a little shrew,
Slander her love, and he forgave it her!
(*They kiss.*)

JESSICA
I would out-night you, did nobody come,
But hark, I hear the footing of a man!
(*Enter Stephano.*)

LORENZO
Who comes so fast in silence of the night? 20

STEPHANO
Stephano is my name; and I bring word
My mistress will before the break of day
Be here at Belmont. She doth stray about
By holy crosses, where she kneels and prays
For happy wedlock hours.
I pray you, is my master yet returned?

LORENZO
He is not, nor we have not heard from him.
But go we in, I pray thee, Jessica,
And ceremoniously let us prepare
Some welcome for the mistress of the house. 30
And yet no matter: why should we go in?
My friend Stephano, signify, I pray you,
Within the house, your mistress is at hand,
And bring you music forth into the air.
(*Exit Stephano.*)
How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears: soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.
Sit, Jessica: look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patterns of bright gold. 40

There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins.
Such harmony is in immortal souls,
But, whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.
(*Enter musicians.*)

Come, ho! And wake Diana with a hymn:
With sweetest touches pierce your mistress' ear
And draw her home with music.
(*Music.*)

(*During the music, Portia and Nerissa enter, as far as possible from the group seated on the bank.*)

PORTIA
That light we see is burning in my hall: 50
How far that little candle throws his beams!
So shines a good deed in a naughty world.

NERISSA
When the moon shone, we did not see the candle.

PORTIA
So doth the greater glory dim the less.
A substitute shines brightly as a king
Until a king be by, and then his state
Empties itself, as doth an inland brook
Into the flood of waters. Music, hark!
(*raising her voice, and speaking to the musicians*)
Peace, ho! The moon sleeps with Endymion,
And would not be awaked! 60
(*Music ceases.*)

LORENZO (*to Jessica*)
That is the voice,
Or I am much deceived, of Portia.

PORTIA (*to Nerissa*)
He knows me, as the blind man knows the cuckoo,
By the bad voice!

LORENZO

Dear lady, welcome home.

PORTIA

We have been praying for our husbands' healths,
Which speed, we hope, the better for our words.
Are they returned?

LORENZO

Madam, they are not yet,
But there is come a messenger before,
To signify their coming.

PORTIA

Go in, Nerissa.
Give order to my servants that they take
No note at all of our being absent hence; 70
Nor you, Lorenzo; Jessica, nor you.

(*Trumpet calls.*)

LORENZO

Your husband is at hand, I hear his trumpet.
We are no tell-tales, madam; fear you not.
(*Enter Bassanio, Antonio, Gratiano, and their attendants.*)

PORTIA (*embracing Bassanio*)

You are welcome home, my lord!

BASSANIO

I thank you, madam. Give welcome to my friend:
This is the man, this is Antonio,
To whom I am so infinitely bound.

PORTIA (*smiling*)

You should in all sense be much bound to him,
For, as I hear, he was much bound for you!

ANTONIO (*bowing*)

No more than I am well acquitted of. 80

PORTIA

Sir, you are very welcome to our house—

(*While Bassanio and Portia have been talking, Gratiano and Nerissa, after greeting each other, have been working up a quarrel in dumb-show. Eventually this breaks out in words, interrupting Portia.*)

GRATIANO (*very annoyed*)

By yonder moon I swear you do me wrong;
In faith, I gave it to the judge's clerk!

PORTIA

A quarrel, ho, already! What's the matter?

GRATIANO (*indignantly*)

About a hoop of gold, a paltry ring
That she did give me, whose motto was
For all the world like cutlers' poetry
Upon a knife:
(*scornfully*)
'Love me and leave me not!'

NERISSA (*furious, almost in tears*)

What talk you of the motto, or the value?
You swore to me, when I did give it you,
That you would wear it till your hour of death,
And that it should lie with you in your grave.
Gave it a judge's clerk! No, God's my judge,
The clerk will ne'er wear hair on's face that had it!

GRATIANO (*shouting*)

He will, an if he live to be a man!

NERISSA (*shouting*)

Ay, if a woman live to be a man!

GRATIANO (*trying patience instead of anger this time, and explaining the whole thing again*)

Now, by this hand, I gave it to a youth,

A kind of boy, a little scrubbèd boy,
No higher than thyself, the judge's clerk.
A prating boy, that begged it as a fee: 10
I could not for my heart deny it him.

PORTIA (*severely*)
You were to blame—I must be plain with you—
To part so slightly with your wife's first gift.
I gave *my* love a ring and made him swear
Never to part with it. And here he stands:
I dare be sworn for him he would not leave it
Nor pluck it from his finger for the wealth
That the world masters. Now, in faith, Gratiano,
You give your wife too unkind cause of grief:
If 'twere to me, I should be mad at it. 1

BASSANIO (*who has been looking very uneasy during Portia's speech, and keeping his ring hand covered, now says in an aside*)
Why, I were best to cut my left hand off,
And swear I lost the ring defending it!

GRATIANO (*eagerly, as if what he says makes everything all right*)
My Lord Bassanio gave *his* ring away
Unto the judge that begged it, and indeed
Deserved it too, and then the boy, his clerk,
That took some pains in writing, he begged mine,
And neither man nor master would take aught
But the two rings.

PORTIA (*concerned*)
What ring gave you, my lord?
Not that, I hope, that you received of me!

BASSANIO (*miserably*)
If I could add a lie unto a fault,
I would deny it, but you see my finger
Hath not the ring upon it: it is gone.

PORTIA (*pretending to be dismayed*)
Even so void is your false heart of truth.

BASSANIO (*pleading*)
Sweet Portia,
If you did know *to* whom I gave the ring,
If you did know *for* whom I gave the ring,
And would conceive for *what* I gave the ring,
And how unwillingly I *left* the ring,
When naught would be accepted *but* the ring,
You would abate the strength of your displeasure.

PORTIA
If you had known the *virtue* of the ring, 130
Or half her worthiness that *gave* the ring,
Or your own honour to *preserve* the ring,
You would not then have parted with the ring!
Nerissa teaches me what to believe:
I'll die for't but some woman had the ring!

BASSANIO (*with emphasis*)
No, by my honour, madam, by my soul,
No woman had it, but a civil doctor,
Who did refuse three thousand ducats of me,
And begged the ring, the which I did deny him,
And suffered him to go displeased away— 140
Even he that did uphold the very life
Of my dear friend. What should I say, sweet lady?
I was enforced to send it after him;
I was beset with shame and courtesy;
My honour would not let ingratitude
So much besmear it. Pardon me, good lady,
For, by these blessèd candles of the night,
Had you been there, I think you would have begged
The ring from me to give the worthy doctor.

PORTIA

Let not that doctor e'er come near my house!
Since he hath got the jewel that I loved,
I will become as liberal as you:
I'll not deny him anything *I* have!

NERISSA (*to Gratiano*)

And I his clerk; therefore be well advised
How you do leave me to mine own protection!

ANTONIO (*apologetically, to Portia*)

I am the unhappy subject of these quarrels.

PORTIA

Sir, grieve not you: you are welcome notwithstanding.

BASSANIO

Portia, forgive me this enforcèd wrong,
And, in the hearing of these many friends,
I swear to thee, even by thine own fair eyes,
Pardon this fault, and by my soul I swear
I never more will break an oath with thee.

ANTONIO (*to Portia*)

I once did lend my body for his wealth,
Which, but for him who had your husband's ring.
Had quite miscarried. I dare be bound again,
My soul upon the forfeit, that your lord
Will never more break faith deliberately.

PORTIA (*giving Antonio a ring*)

Then you shall be his surety. Give him this,
And bid him keep it better than the other.

ANTONIO (*giving the ring to Bassanio*)

Here, Lord Bassanio: swear to keep *this* ring.

BASSANIO (*astonished*)

By heaven! It is the same I gave the doctor!

PORTIA (*sweetly*)
I had it from him. . . . . You are all amazed.
Here is a letter; read it at your leisure.
It comes from Padua, from Bellario.
There shall you find that Portia was the doctor,
Nerissa, there, her clerk. Lorenzo here
Shall witness I set forth as soon as you
And even but now returned: I have not yet
Entered my house. Antonio, you are welcome,
And I have better news in store for you 180
Than you expect.
(*giving a letter*)
Unseal this letter soon:
There you shall find three of your argosies
Are richly come to harbour suddenly!
You shall not know by what strange accident
I chanced upon this letter.

ANTONIO (*overwhelmed*)
I am dumb.

BASSANIO (*amazed*)
Were you the doctor and I knew you not?

ANTONIO (*looking up from the letter*)
Sweet lady, you have given me life *and* living,
For here I read for certain that my ships
Are safely come to port!

RTIA
How now, Lorenzo!
My clerk hath some good comforts too for you. 190

ERISSA
Ay, and I'll give them him without a fee.
iving a scroll to Lorenzo)
here do I give to you and Jessica,
rom the rich Jew, a special deed of gift,
ter his death, of all he dies possessed of.

LORENZO
Fair ladies, you drop manna in the way
Of starvèd people!

PORTIA (*moving towards house*)
It is almost morning,
And yet I am sure you are not satisfied
Of these events at full. Let us go in,
And we will answer all things faithfully.

GRATIANO (*mopping his brow as he follows*)
Well, while I live I'll fear no other thing
So sore as keeping safe Nerissa's ring!

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